

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An apparatus for projecting a laser beam onto a target from which to measure the position of a nearby object, the apparatus comprising:
 - a laser;
 - a measuring device; and
 - a target.
2. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the laser emits a laser beam in the about blue-green visible range.
3. The apparatus of claim 1, where in the laser emits a laser beam having a wavelength in the about 450-550 nm range.
4. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the laser emits a laser beam having a wavelength of about 532 nm.
5. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the measuring device comprises first down markers and a chain.
6. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the target comprises a non-reflective material.
7. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the target has the dimensions of about 24-36 inches tall and about 24-36 inches wide.
8. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the target is attached to a collapsible handle.
9. An apparatus for projecting a laser beam onto a target from which to measure the position of a nearby object, the apparatus comprising:
 - a laser emitting the laser beam, the laser beam having a wavelength in the range of from about 450 nm to about 550 nm;

means for shaping the beam;

a measuring device comprising a first down marker pole and scrimmage pole connected by a chain wherein the laser is attached to the first down marker pole; and a target.

10. The apparatus of claim 9, wherein the means for shaping the beam comprises a reciprocating member acting to move the beam back and forth to make the beam appear as a vertical line.

11. A method for promoting an accurate measurement of first downs comprising:

aligning a forward first down marker on a sideline of a football field;

positioning a laser apparatus attached to the forward first down marker at a 90° angle with the sideline;

positioning a target on the far side of the football;

projecting a laser beam over the field toward the target;

shaping the laser beam with the aid of a beam shaper;

intercepting the projected laser beam on the target thereby creating a laser first down mark near the football; and

determining the position of the football relative to the laser first down mark on the target.

12. The method of claim 11, wherein shaping the laser beam comprises moving the beam back and forth to make the beam appear as a vertical line.